



Juan Danilo Hurtado, left, and other students work on a group project during an English class at Harlem Library. Photo: Beowulf Sheehan.

Read, Write, Learn English at NYPL

Library Expands Free Literacy and English Classes for Adults

Juan Danilo Hurtado, a former surgical nurse who moved to New York City from Colombia last year, lights up when he discusses the way he used to help people through his old job in Bogota.

Hurtado is eager to get back to work in his newfound home—but first he knows he must improve his English.

“Not every field requires speaking with people all the time, but mine does. Relationships are very important for nurses,” says Hurtado, who began taking free English classes at The New York Public Library last spring.

“When I arrived here, the first thing I did was find where I could study English,” adds Hurtado, who commutes to his class at Harlem Library twice a week from his home in White Plains. He also uses one of the

Library’s online subscriptions to Rosetta Stone to practice on his own. “I need to learn English so I can work in a hospital.”

*“I need to learn English
so I can work in a hospital.”*

—Juan Danilo Hurtado

Hurtado is one of thousands of adult students who are learning to read, write, and speak English—for free—at the Library thanks to NYPL’s new expanded ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and adult literacy programs.

The Library has offered similar services on a smaller scale for more than two decades. But

this spring, in order to meet the needs of its patrons, NYPL began changing and dramatically expanding the program to provide greater services to the increasing numbers of immigrants who call New York City home.

PROVIDING HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY

“Libraries are much more than just books on shelves. They provide hope and opportunity,” says Library President Anthony Marx, who has made expanding the program a major priority. “From our new ESOL and literacy classes to our after-school programs and other new programming initiatives, The New York Public Library strives to be an educational center for all New Yorkers.”

As part of the new initiative, NYPL has changed the name of its former adult literacy program to Adult Learning Centers, from Centers for Reading and Writing. In addition,

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On the cover: Juan Danilo Hurtado at Harlem Library. Photo: Beowulf Sheehan.

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Junior Lora from the Dominican Republic wants to learn English so he can become a teacher. Photo: Beowulf Sheehan.

the Library has put far more emphasis on teaching English as a second language by expanding the number of locations where ESOL classes are offered, creating its own curriculum, and adding daytime, weekend, and summer classes to its already full roster of evening classes.

The Library has also expanded the program to include more preparation for the U.S. citizenship test.

A GROWING NEED

The new initiative aims to address the city's growing need for free English instruction. According to a recent report by The Center for an Urban Future, there are approximately 60,000 state-funded ESOL class spots available in the city, not including the Library's services, though about 500,000 city residents lack English proficiency.

Last year, the Library offered 96 English classes at 16 libraries through a program run by an outside provider and administered by NYPL. This year, the Library's program will offer nearly 300 classes at 27 libraries; next year, it will expand even further.

"There is a tremendous need for these classes," says Steve Mahoney, who oversees the Library's ESOL program, noting that more than 500 prospective students turned out for a recent information session. "The line was out the door and around the block."

In addition, Mahoney says the Library's new ESOL classes introduce immigrants to a host of other free Library services. "We've found we're developing a more holistic library user," Mahoney notes. "The students go on library tours, get library cards, meet librarians, and participate in other library programs."

IMPROVING LIVES

Kadiatou Barry, who is originally from Guinea and has been taking English classes at the St. George Library on Staten Island for more than a year, says the program has helped her improve her skills dramatically.

"It's helping a lot," says Barry, a home health aide who dreams of getting her GED and then going to college. In fact, with the Library's help, Barry even recently passed her citizenship test. "I never thought I could do this. I didn't know how to read. Now I'm working on my skills, and I can see a real future in this country."

Barry attends class at the Library twice a week—while juggling work and her three children. Still, she's an eager student. "If they have more classes, I will take them," says Barry, who came to the U.S. in 1995.

"I wanted to study like this a long time ago. But I kept hearing that I couldn't go to school here because I had not been able to go to school and finish a degree in my country."

Barry's enthusiasm is shared by students in Hurtado's class at Harlem Library.

Classmate Junior Lora, who came to New York City from the Dominican Republic two years ago, only began classes in October, but he's already feeling more confident.

"I want to learn English so I can go to university," says Lora, who aspires to be a physical education teacher. "Without the Library, I wouldn't be able to do this."

Hurtado readily agrees with Lora and credits the Library's free English classes with helping him follow his dreams. "Little by little, I am climbing the mountain," says Hurtado proudly. "Nothing is impossible." ●

\$5 MILLION GRANT BRINGS LIBRARY BOOKS TO 1.1 MILLION STUDENTS

A GROUND-BREAKING NYPL PILOT that brings Library materials to public school students will expand to every school in the city, thanks to a \$5 million donation from Citi.

The grant, which NYPL announced this fall in conjunction with Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Citi officials, and leaders from the Brooklyn and Queens libraries, will allow the Library's well-received MyLibraryNYC program to reach all 1.1 million students in the city's public schools by 2015. The program links city schools to the 17 million items in the three public libraries' catalogs

and allows teachers to have library books and materials delivered directly to their schools.

"Libraries are an indispensable asset to our students," said Mayor Bloomberg. "This program is a great example of the public and private sectors coming together to invest in our children and the city's future."

NYPL launched the project last year in 86 schools in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island. It is expanding to 400 citywide this year with the help of Queens Library and the Brooklyn Public Library. ●

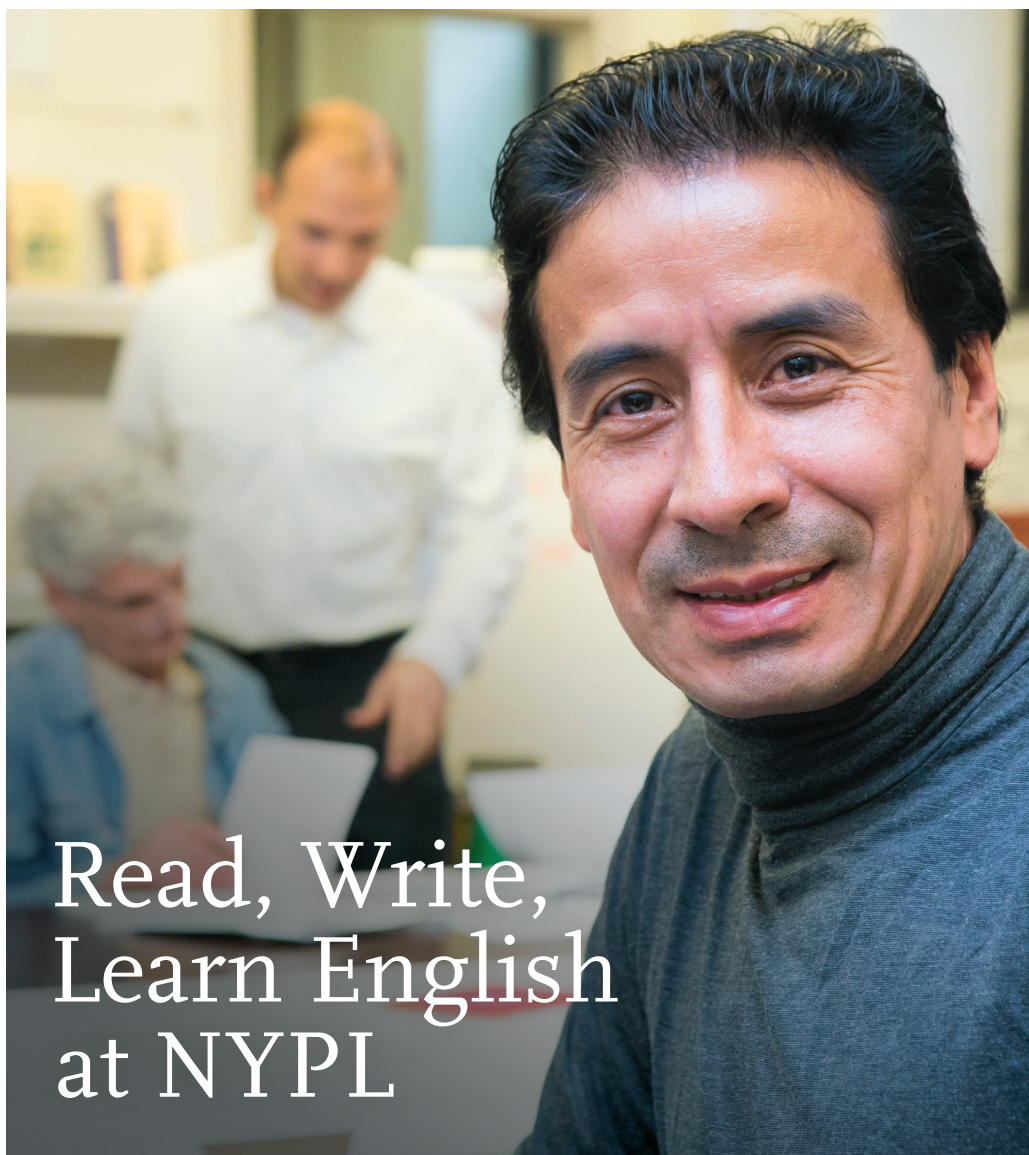


Mayor Bloomberg (center), NYPL President Anthony Marx (left) and Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott (right) join students to thank Citi for its \$5 million donation. Photo: Richert Schnorr.

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A NEWSLETTER FOR
SUPPORTERS OF
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WINTER 2012-13



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